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Reform Club

(New York, N.Y.)

Corsets and the tariff

New York City

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# TARIFF REFORM.

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NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 1, 1888.

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## CORSETS AND THE TARIFF.

### CORSETS.

In answer to a circular from the Hon. Daniel Manning, Secretary of the United States Treasury, Messrs. Warner Bros. writes as follows :

*Dear Sir :* We will offer a few facts and suggestions relative to the duty on sewed corsets, which will embrace our observations and experience. In addition to our experience of manufacturers of corsets we are also quite extensive importers of corsets and corset materials.

Our factory is located at Bridgeport, Conn. where we have the advantages of abundance of intelligent operatives and close proximity to the metropolis of the nation. Our factory is 537 feet long and 40 feet wide and four stories high.

The building and land are worth \$95,000.

The machinery and fixtures \$55,000.

Our sales for 1884 were \$1,274,000.

The capital used in our business, including real estate and machinery. is about \$750,000.

The corsets sold in this country vary in price from \$4 to \$30 per dozen, besides a limited number of silk corsets at \$50 and \$60 per dozen. Nine-tenths of the domestic corsets are sold at prices not exceeding \$12 per dozen, while more than four-fifths of the imported corsets are sold at prices above \$12 per dozen.

On all the cheapest grade of corsets there is practically no competition from imported. They are made of domestic cotton jean and all of the material is of domestic production except the horn strips, which are imported free of duty, and the cotton lace (called Cluny lace) which is used to trim the top of the corset, and which is imported from Nottingham, England, at a duty of 40 per cent. ad valorem. Take as a sample of these corsets one which retails at \$1 and which sells to the retail trade at \$9 per dozen, and to the wholesale trade at \$7.50 per dozen, and the items of cost are about as follows for one dozen :

### MATERIALS.

14 yards of cloth at 9 cents.....	\$1.26
Steels .....	.35
Horn .....	1.40
14 yards Cluny lace, at 2 cents.....	.28
Thread .....	.22
Lacing, binding, eyelets.....	.15
Boxes.....	.30
	<hr/>
	\$3.96

LABOR.	
Stitching .....	\$1.35
Hand labor .....	37
	<u>\$1.72</u>
General expenses, 12 per cent. ....	\$5.68
	<u>.67</u>
Total cost of manufacture .....	<u>\$6.35</u>

In many instances in place of the horn strips a stiffening cord is used, which is stitched directly into the corset. This increases the machine work, and lessens to a like extent the hand work, but does not materially affect the price of the corset.

The finest grades of corsets differ from the above in being made of a fine grade of coutil or saten, with finer trimmings and with more hand work, especially the ornamentation of the corset with silk embroidery or flossing. The following may be taken as the average cost of a corset of this class :

MATERIALS.	
14 yards cloth, at 30 cents. ....	\$4.20
Horn .....	1.40
Steels .....	.50
Lace .....	.60
Thread .....	.20
Lacing and eyelets .....	.12
Silk .....	1.00
Boxes .....	.50
	<u>\$8.52</u>

LABOR.	
Stitching .....	\$8.75
Hand work .....	2.00
	<u>\$5.75</u>
General expenses, 12 per cent. ....	\$14.27
	<u>1.70</u>
Total cost of manufacture .....	<u>\$15.97</u>

This class of goods can be at present imported more cheaply than they can be manufactured in this country, for the following reasons :

This grade of cloth and lace are not manufactured in this country, and each is imported at a higher rate of duty than that paid on manufactured corsets. *The thread and silk are also protected by a higher rate of duty than that paid on corsets, and cost in this market fully 40 per cent. more than in the European market.* The difference in the cost of labor and running expenses between here and France or England is fully equal to 25 per cent. duty. Thus it will be seen that our present duties discriminate against the American manufacturers to the excess of the amount of duty paid on the corset materials in excess of the duty paid on the corsets.

The corset trade of this country would be sufficiently protected by a duty of 25 or 30 per cent. provided that the duty on material used in making corsets were reduced to the same or a lower figure. *We do not need higher protection, but more consistent protection.* Cloth, lace, and thread occupy an intermediate position between the raw materials and goods manufactured ready for actual wear, and the duty on these should be less than on manufactured goods.

NEW YORK, Oct. 20, 1885.

**END OF  
TITLE**